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## SERMON XIV.

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### OUR SALVATION NEARER.

ROMANS, XIII. 11.—Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Human life is a journey, or a voyage, or a race. In its progress we are all tending toward a distant, but a certain point; a port, a goal, a home, it may be, from whence we shall never return to the place from which we have taken our departure.

In the Scripture this fact is sometimes presented, in the way of warning. We may incur the most dreadful loss, if we are careless and neglectful of our bearings, or flag in our exertions. We are moving over a full sea: there are fogs and tempests. There are a thousand devious paths into which our footsteps may be beguiled. There are a thousand enemies, and in one moment the gayest hopes may be dashed to ruin.

In the text, the thought of this continual progress toward the desired haven is presented, to induce serious consideration; to stimulate our flagging energies; to rouse to wakeful diligence; to encourage the full assurance of hope and activity, with the certainty of the benefit to which, if we are in the right course, we are approximating; "and that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

**IF YOU ARE GENUINE CHRISTIANS, YOU ARE GOING TO HEAVEN !** The consummation of your faith and hope continually draws nearer. To some, indeed, it is very near. This, then, is a very interesting motive to prompt your zeal and stimulate your activity.

For, observe, that in the text we are supposed to be asleep, forgetful, lethargic, indolent.

All men are naturally thus in regard to spiritual and eternal things. To them they are dead ; while they awake and are all alive in the pursuits of the world, and of sin, and unbelief.

This was the character and condition of Christians, like all other men, before they believed. And even now, they are imperfect, in faith and in love, in duty and in patience. They often relapse into transgressions ; they relax effort ; they lose vigor ; they anticipate rest and ease too soon ; they mistake the nature of Christian obligation. Backsliding, worldly-minded, prayerless, unmindful of spiritual prosperity and listless towards eternal things ; they have no conversation in heaven ; they walk not as children of the day ; they do not watch ; they sleep.

Hence, even they are called to remember, and reflect on their approaching end. The day is at hand ; let them therefore cast off the condition of the night ; let them banish sloth ; let them be up betimes for the morning ; let them emerge from the darkness, the inaction and the torpor ; let them be arrayed and girded with the graces of the Christian life, ready for their work, ready for their judgment, ready and looking for their reward in glory.

The night is spending fast,—already the day of spiritual duty and privilege and blessing, is dawning. Soon will it shine—higher and brighter—more and more to the perfect day.

It is high time then to wake out of sleep—for now is our salvation nearer, &c.

This consideration should,

I. In the first place, stir us up to great diligence in the duties that are incumbent on us as Christians, in the little and diminishing time that remains to us for their accomplishment.

We are to glorify God here, in a style which is not possible in Heaven. Here we are to grow in grace, and increase to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Our corruptions are to be subdued ; our evil passions to be overcome ; our vain, malicious, discontented, envious, revengeful feelings to be corrected, or rather extirpated ; our hearts to be purified by faith ; our affections to be elevated ; our love to be warmed ; our knowledge enlarged ; our patience perfected ; our usefulness augmented ; our light must shine ; we must do good as we have opportunity to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith.

We must “serve our generation according to the will of God.

Other men are to be won by our efforts and by our good conversation in Christ—who may be our companions in glory. *There* we shall serve God and glorify Him. But *here*, there are attainments and services appropriate to our present condition and relations. We often confess our short-comings and our sins : but, however, we may view them or forget, or ignore them, we *do not desire to be found in them and under their dominion at death*, nor expect to stand in judgment under their burden, nor to enter heaven with them. We often live, and indulge ourselves in passions and thoughts and purposes, *in the midst of which we neither intend, nor wish to die* ; which we know cannot help us on to heaven, and must thence forever be excluded, or they will exclude us. How long, then, do we mean to cherish them ? If ever, then, we intend to do all our duty to ourselves, to our neighbour, to God, to our soul's peace, we must be about this business now. We need all the time that yet remains to us, and to strive, with all the aids of grace, to get the mastery at once over the evil that is in us, and to do the good that God commands us, for the night cometh in which no man can work.

It is in this way, we are to glorify God on the earth. We are not our own ; he has bought us, with a price ; our bodies and our souls are to be employed for him. All our obligations to His grace, to his command, and his exhortation ; all the sense of grateful dependence and thankful enjoyment of his blessings, various and undeserved, through all our lives thus far ; and all our privileges in the gospel, and in the midst of the heavenly places into which we are raised up by Christ Jesus, in the precious truths and exalted worship of the house of God, and in the exceeding great and precious promises of his faithful word ;—all the mercy and love displayed in the gift of Jesus Christ ; all our redemption by his blood, and our high destiny as the heirs of heaven ; and all the purpose and object of our creation and our regeneration by the Holy Ghost, that we might be a peculiar, a holy, a zealous people for God ; and all the consideration of our own peace and comfort, in doing and suffering the will of God for our sanctification and salvation ;—and the thought that time is allotted to us for all this very work,—and the fact that our Redeemer and Lord, claims us for it, and expects it of us,—that his claims reach onward through eternity, and pervade every world, and his service is the employment of Heaven and the fit occupation of the earth,—and that thus we become meet for the divine inheritance ;—nay, when we have done our utmost we are still unprofitable servants, and far below our duty ;—all this impels us to break off sins by righteousness, to let the time, past of our lives suffice for the low and selfish ways of a carnal world and a corrupt nature, and to be diligent, expectant, earnest, like men acquitting ourselves, and as faithful servants,

looking for the coming of their Lord, to reckon with them and to reward them.

Have any of you, beloved, a well founded hope in Him? Surely you will exercise it in waiting for him, in serving, and in glorifying and praising Him, all the more as you see the day approaching. Have you not such a hope? Remember all his benefits: his goodness leads to repentance, and to the attainment of that hope which maketh not ashamed.

Consider, all of you, *how much of our time has been misspent*, that ought to have been devoted to God, and laid out for heaven in becoming more and more in sympathy and adaptation for its high service and joy. "We were the servants of sin," of wordly lusts, and selfish desires. And is it not enough that we have so long "wrought the will of the Gentiles," in living so much like thoughtless, sensual, and unbelieving pagans? Consider, too, *how near we are to our end*. We may regret the evil of our past life, yet rejoice too, on some accounts, that it is past, its sorrow with its sin so far gone. But *what shall we do in the future?* We cannot atone for our past sin. *That* may be remitted through the blood of Christ if we are truly penitent. But penitent we must be—and all the future must vindicate the sincerity of our repentance, as we follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. But how little is the time that is left for this indispensable attainment? The night cometh in which no man can work. Hence, the more earnestly should we arouse, and act, that the very little point of time,—the moment's space that is left for our use, should be adequately occupied and employed.

But, now, in connection with this thought, we may,

II. In the second place, consider the nearness, the nature, and the place of our salvation, and be stimulated to a more active, increased, and becoming preparation for the companionships and service of heaven itself.

It is an amazing thought, yet it is true, and I repeat it, that if you are Christians indeed, you are *shortly* to be introduced into that blessed abode!

What a change from the present, what a revolution in all our circumstances and associations! What a disencumbering of all this array of our flesh, with all its interests and pleadings, its wants and its blinding deceits, which have so often imposed upon us the pretences of selfishness, and pride, and ungodly lusts, to nourish and strengthen our baser passions, and to sanction our inconsistencies and ways that are not good, nor after the simplicity, the meekness, and the purity of Christ, our life and our example! What an unveiling of all hearts, and of our hearts! What seeing as we are seen, and knowing as we are

known ; yea, what a *being seen*, and *being known*, just as we are, and for exactly what we are worth ! Men have sometimes foolishly wished that all mankind wore windows in their breasts, so that the secrets of all hearts might be read. Such knowledge would be unfit for us here ; it would be intolerable. But, in heaven, it *will* be realized ; and all companionships, associations, relations, will be transparent, as they will be harmonious. But, while there, all will be confidence and love, and the happiness of heaven, once gained, shall be unalloyed, I cannot help thinking, sometimes, that in *the near view of approaching death*, there may be misgivings, and a dread of meetings and disclosures, and adjustments (if not of partings), as if they would, for a moment at least, be embarrassing and inflict a pang ! It seems now, to us, to be natural to feel as if, in that solemn hour, we might, even though pardoned and purified, and fearing no evil, nevertheless anticipate such meetings with those who have gone before us, with such reflections as these : "How we may have been partakers with each other's sins ; how we may have treated each other with neglect, or unkindness, or injustice, or cruelty ; how we have lived after they died ; and, now, we are about to meet them, recollecting our dishonor to their memory, though we cherished it, and how we did injustice to their hearts' hopes and to those they left behind them !" Friends that were unreconciled ; families that were alienated ; wounds that rankled in secret, until death itself came and found us, remorseful enough, albeit penitent for all this, but penitent, perhaps, only in that last hour of earth when conscience shook us, and repentance seemed too late, and reparation was no longer possible ! To injure the living is bad enough ! but to injure the dead ! and to remember those injuries over which the grave has closed ! and to anticipate, with shame, such meetings with those whom we have long believed, and comforted ourselves with believing, were in heaven ! Surely, it would not be strange if we thought beforehand of that hour with misgivings and downcast hearts, and the fear of hearing them say, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend !" And *more than all this*,

"When Thou my righteous Judge shall come  
To take Thy ransomed people home,"

when, with faith and hope, are still mingled our penitent tears and the consciousness of all our misdoings, even while we are trusting in Jesus and *are reconciled* to God, there *would seem* to linger around that dying hour, some dread, and shame, and sense of unfitness in us, even for that gracious, yet solemn interview with our God and Saviour ! some shadow from the past projected forward to the very hour, when

"Our Lord shall stand disclosed  
In majesty severe"—

something of that feeling of which, even now, we *are* conscious, while our soul, though resting as it does in the pardons of the cross, still confesses as we sing,

“ When, rising from the bed of death,  
O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear,  
I see my Maker, face to face,  
O, how shall I appear !

Yea, still, while pardon may be found,  
And mercy may be sought,  
My heart, with inward horror shrinks  
And trembles at the thought !”

And what does all this suggest, but that, now, in the accepted time and the day of salvation, we should make our calling and election sure, and seek for immediate and perfect reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, and *as* the fruit of it, live in friendship with our fellow Christians, and dwell in love with our kindred, and confess our faults, one to the other, and make all restitution for injuries, and forbear one another in love, and so live in mutual confidence that our prayers may be offered without hindrance, as becomes those who are heirs together of eternal life, and expect to live together and to love each other forever in heaven.

In the bright world to which we go, are already gathered and garnered all the dear loved ones who died in Christ, and crossed the flood before us, with hopes and prayers for our coming to join them : there, too, are all the saints of all ages, the spirits of just men made perfect ; the holy prophets, apostles and martyrs who sealed their testimony for Jesus with their blood ; there, too, the innumerable company of angels ; there too is Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and God, the judge of all. There, too, in the heavenly City, there is perfect purity and joy, and an eternity of holy employment, and the service of God day and night in his temple. There, even now, where we expect to come, God is governing, Christ is interceding (a priest upon his throne) ; the Spirit is ever proceeding from the Father and the Son to sanctify His people who are yet upon the earth ; and the angels that excel in strength, also, go forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation ; and there the redeemed from earth are praising glorifying, and serving, and enjoying God day and night in His temple forever. There is no unholiness, no note of discord, no unfriendly hearts, no rebellious temper, no disobedience nor imperfection whatever. If you are Christians *you are to be joined to that glorious company* and pure and lovely life. Every year, and every day, is bringing you nearer and nearer to it.

Ought it not to engage our thoughts, our hearts, our prayers, and our labors here ? Ought we not to examine ourselves to



see if we are in sympathy with the character of heavenly life ; life in heaven. Ought we not to set our affection upon it, to live for it, to acquire meetness for it, to attain by practical and experimental godliness, *a holy sagacity and skill* in God's service here, that we may be ready to be advanced to its higher forms and more illustrious exercises in the glory that shall be both brought to us and revealed in us as those whose conversation here has been in heaven ! You would not have so mean an estimate and expectation as barely to *get* to heaven without acquaintance or fitness for its dignified and holy service ! You would not be satisfied, barely to get in ; but to have an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom, etc. If the low hope (and selfish I had well nigh called it), do not entirely exclude the man who barely looks for escape and refuge, and *if* its lowest place be unutterably and surpassingly glorious, yet what is it to be like the elders that sit on the high thrones ; like Moses, and Abraham, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and John, yea to be like Christ himself !

It is this exalted company—for, such exalted fitness,—we should aspire ; and all the more, as now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. As the end draws nigh—and the time is short—let us *all the more* strive to set our souls in order for the glory to which we aspire.

III. In the third place, the nearness of our salvation may well encourage joy on account of our speedy accession to our eternal home.

How would the voyager feel in returning from a foreign clime ? There wandering, he has felt amid his toilsome business and fatiguing travel and its discomforts, the pain of absence and the want of all those domestic joys which support and compensate amid manifold privations. He has been solaced by the hope of return ; and so much the more, as he sees the appointed time drawing nearer.

I have seen lads at school, mark in a column, one after another, the days that are to intervene before vacation and home ; and day by day tearing away from the column, one and another mark, gleefully watching the diminishing number that showed the shortening time.

I have myself, when thousands of miles away across the ocean, after dragging at each remove a lengthening chain, felt a sensible relief, when the eastern limit of my wandering had been reached, and the very next day would dawn on my footsteps set toward the west, and I should be homeward bound. But when the traveler realizes that he has embarked ; that each favoring gale is speeding him toward the loved shores of country and home, how little does he reckon his recent toils : he is scarcely

aware of still attendant peril ; he looks forward to the roof-tree and the fireside, which not all the waste of waters around him can efface from his anticipating heart. He fondly imagines the joyful greeting ; and when at length he discerns, skirting the distant horizon, the shores and hills of his native land, what an eager, longing, beaming eye he casts abroad to catch every loved haunt and familiar scene. There are the darlings of his enraptured heart ; he can almost embrace them from the deck on which he stands and gazes. There is the reward of his toil. He lands and gives up his soul to his sacred home-bred joys.

What are *we* now but strangers and pilgrims on the earth ? Heaven is our home. There is the city which hath foundations. The ransomed of the Lord are nearing it every day. It is theirs patiently to wait for it, while yet they are conscious of a desire to depart and be with Christ, forever with the Lord. Death itself is but a narrow sea, and it cannot make our souls afraid.

IV. The nearness of salvation is adapted to animate and comfort the heart under its varied burdens of trial and sorrow.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous. In the throng and pressure, there is hope of deliverance, and of final, utter exemption from their recurrence ; and of surpassing compensation in that land where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

But, "now," many of our appointed tribulations are *actually over, and done with forever*. They are now fewer than when we first encountered them. The allotment is continually diminished by the measure of every endurance. Soon, the *very last one of all* will alone remain. Who would faint before such a prospect of the *near* termination of all his troubles. You *contend* for a glorious prize. So far from being dispirited, every new trial should be met with cheerfulness, because there is one less to encounter. Every victory gives new strength and added skill ; and greater grace and the hopes of success inspired by every previous success, or strong endurance, makes the burden lighter, and the foe less formidable, and the conquest easier ; and we are more prepared for the final struggle, and the victor's shout of triumph. You are *nearer* to the prize ; it is ready to be seized ; all things give assurance that you will gain it ; all things work together for your eternal good.

If it were told you that the very last trial is come, how would you be braced up to meet it ; and especially if you were assured of success. You have that assurance. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith in the blood of the Lamb. Your armour is of heavenly temper ; and the arm of the Captain of salvation is with you ; and the joy of the Lord is your strength. And if you are very near to the gates of the grave,



why, the *last* enemy that shall be destroyed is death—and death, the last enemy, *shall be* destroyed. For you it is then reserved to shout, “O death, where is thy sting, etc.” (1 Cor. iv. : 55–57.)

Be steadfast, then, patient, sober, and hope on unto the end. The Lord is at hand. His coming draweth nigh. Wait on Him.

Rejoice, O grieving heart!  
The hours fly fast;  
With each some sorrow dies,  
With each some shadow flies,  
Until at last  
The red dawn in the east  
Bids weary night depart,  
And pain is past.  
Rejoice, then, grieving heart,  
The hours fly fast!

V. This nearness of salvation ought to be a powerful inducement to forsake all sin and worldliness. (Vs. 12, 13, 14.)

What has a Christian so near his crown to do with the strifes, the lusts, the ways, the schemes, the beggarly elements of this passing world? You hope soon to be in Heaven. Will you live as if your home, and life, and heart, were all of the earth—earthy?

Christian! think of these things. Be diligent, that you may be found of Him in peace. Let your conversation (citizenship) be in Heaven. Let your deportment correspond with it. Be full of joy in the Holy Ghost. Be comforted. Be ashamed of sin. Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth, at the right hand of God. Endure affliction by the prospect of the coming rest. In everything give thanks, and show the temper and disposition of the guileless, peaceful, trusting, believing, loving children of your Heavenly Father. Now is your salvation nearer, etc.

Sinner! what is near to you? “Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and damnation slumbereth not!” The judgment! Eternity! Eternity in Hell!

No cheering, sustained hope is before you. No attendant angels guard your way, nor accompany you to Heaven. Sorrow succeeds to your chosen joy; and death, and night, and woe, wind up the scene!

O repent, repent! The *night* cometh: the day is far spent! It is high time: Awake! awake! Will you, can you, dare you sleep on?

Jesus still waits indeed. Now, now, now is the accepted time. But *now*, if ye will hear his voice; *now*, if ye harden not your heart; *now*, it is safe, and practicable. The *alternative* may be “NEVER!” never shall ye enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

The bones of God's ancient people bleached in the wilderness, fallen there because of their unbelief; shall your souls perish too, from the very threshold of salvation? *Shall* He swear in His wrath concerning *you*, ye shall *never* see my rest?

## SERMON V.

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### ECONOMY A CHRISTIAN DUTY.

“When they were filled he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”—ST. JOHN vi. 12.

These words occur in the account of the feeding of five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, a miracle which alone, of all our Lord's mighty works, is recorded by all four of the Evangelists. This circumstance has led some to consider the miracle as particularly significant and marvellous, and, for that reason, so carefully recorded. It is hard to see, however, in what respect there was a greater display of Divine power, in thus creating food on the instant, than there was in turning water into wine, or in hushing a furious storm by a word, or in calling a dead man out of the grave wherein he had lain four days. A more natural explanation of the fact is gained by considering that the three first Evangelists, in giving a synopsis of our Lord's life, would naturally record this as they did others of his miracles of mercy, while the fourth one, who wrote a supplementary gospel, was induced to depart from his usual custom, of omitting what the others had stated, and to mention this one, because it furnished the occasion of one of our Saviour's discourses, of which he alone was inspired to preserve the record.

But whatever may have been John's motive for recounting the miracle, he alone has stated the interesting circumstances mentioned in the text. All inform us that the twelve baskets of fragments were collected after the multitude had been fed, a statement which shows how ample and complete the supply had been, and also brings the occurrence into harmony, with the similar, but less striking miracle told of Elisha, (2 Kings iv. 42-44,) in which twenty barley loaves and a few fresh wheaten ears were made to supply a hundred men, so that there was left over a quantity which was not needed. The text informs us that the gathering of the baskets full was not an accidental thing, nor even a spontaneous impulse of the disciples, but the result of a spe-

cific direction given by our Lord. And this for a reason assigned, not, as some (Alford *in lo*) have said, to supply the Apostles' future wants, although the fragments were, no doubt, used for that purpose ; nor as others (cf. Stier) suggest, to prevent the people from foolishly carrying away portions "as relics," for such an attempt, even if made, would defeat itself, but as our lord said, "that nothing be lost." It is a proverb confirmed by all human experience, that, "what comes easily goes easily," and nothing would have been more natural than for the entire multitude, disciples and all, after having been so abundantly fed without any effort of their own, to cast idly away the broken food that remained, as if unworthy of notice or care. But he who knew what was in man, seized just this occasion to inculcate a principle of universal application. The stores of Omnipotence are indeed inexhaustible, and the living proof was before the eyes, but nothing was to be wasted. The same power which had satisfied thousands out of a few loaves and fishes, could repeat the operation every meal time ; still the law was, that nothing should be lost.

The principle, as I have said, is of universal application. It concerns the use, not only of food and property of every kind, but also of time, of talent, of influence, of whatever we are entrusted with. And it extends to individuals of both sexes and all ages and classes, to households, to congregations, to communities, to corporations, and to the State itself. The same reasons which make it a duty for any one to guard against waste, make it an equal duty for all the rest. Yet it is a law against which plausible objections may be and are easily raised. Some say it is unbecoming the spirituality of the gospel, which treats of the great, vital relations of the soul, and does not condescend to the mint, anise, and cummin of every day life. But how great the mistake ! The gospel is a perfect rule of life, and brings under its solemn and affecting sanctions every interest of humanity. It requires body, soul, and spirit to be sanctified, and it sheds dignity upon the humblest offices of human duty, by requiring them to be in the name of Christ, and for the honor of his cause. And the reference to the garden herbs which the Jews punctiliously offered, while they utterly neglected the weightier matters of the law, is strangely out of place ; for of the two classes of obligations thus contrasted, our Lord expressly said, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It is an old wile of the Evil One to play off different classes of duties against each other, and make the performance of the one an excuse for neglecting the other. But the true believer says with David, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right."

Others, again, object to the principle as tending to a mean, degrading penuriousness, inconsistent with largeness of heart,

or the truly generous elements of a human character. But this is confounding things that differ. The sacred Scriptures have no patience with a niggard. They denounce selfishness in every form, and at every turn. Generosity is a marked feature in the example of every eminently good man, whether of the Old Testament or the New. The roll of the saints shows many a rich man, but no misers; and many a poor man, but no spend-thrifts. It is the motive which gives character to the act. Two men may save, with pinching exactness; the one does it to hoard his filthy lucre; the other to pay off a just debt, and maintain a good conscience. Two other men may spend with equal and lavish profusion; but one does it simply to pamper his own pride and luxury, the other to glorify God and bless the souls and bodies of his fellow-men. To guard against waste does not mean to become a slave of avarice, to drown the soul in the lust of accumulation, or to act as if the chief end of man were to make or save money. But it does mean to carry the spirit of the gospel into the ordinary duties of daily life; and, as the Apostle says, "to eat and drink to the glory of God." No one, who is frugal on Christian principle, who shuns prodigality because Christ makes it a sin, who economizes because he is a steward of the Great Householder, will be in the least danger of falling into the odious meanness of a mere miser. In his case, the motive elevates and sanctifies the deed, and that which, if done from selfish or avaricious views, would degrade him alike in his own eyes and those of others, being done from noble and sacred aspirations, rather quickens and enlarge his soul.

But why is it a law of Christ that nothing should be wasted?

I answer: I. Because *what we have is not our own*. Our title to it is, no doubt, absolute and exclusive, so far as regards our fellow-creatures, but not as regards our Maker. He made it, and he made us, and both are subject to his will. The well-known injunction of the parable applies to every human being, "Occupy till I come." The Father of lights gives liberally, and upbraids not. His hand is ever open. His bounties flow in a continuous stream. Yet all are for a purpose. We are to use and enjoy, to buy or to sell, to exchange or to give, not to waste or neglect. This is the law of his universe. Use is written on all the works of his hands. Bird and beast and creeping thing, flowers of the field and grass on the mountains, the morning cloud and evening dew, the summer shower and the stormy wind fulfilling his word, all things, animate and inanimate, serve a purpose. The farther man penetrates into the secrets of nature, the more clearly does he discover traces of useful design in all that contributes to make up the beautiful world in which we dwell. And man, the head and lord of creation, as being intelligent and

rational, is the more bound to obey the same law. We are called into being to serve and glorify our Maker ; and, to accomplish this end, are very variously endowed.

Now, to waste any of these endowments—*i. e.* to consume them without accomplishing any good end—is substantially to deny our stewardship, and to defeat the very object for which we were created and sent into the world. It is to do what we have no right to do. It is spurning God's authority. It is to make an ungrateful return for his benefits. It is impiously to say, "Who is the Lord, that we should serve him?" Men, indeed, do not usually look upon prodigality in this aspect. To most it seems, if an offense at all, one of a minor and very venial class. But this is because of their vague and inadequate ideas of human responsibility. The sacred Scriptures set it in a very different light. The man who wrapped his talent in a napkin, did not turn his money to a wicked end ; he did not even waste the money itself ; but he wasted the proper use of it ; he threw away the opportunity to make some profit out of it for man's good and God's glory, and, therefore, he was condemned, out of his own mouth, as a wicked servant, and an enemy of his lord.

Waste often escapes notice as wrong, because it is a negative sin. It usually proceeds from the lack of thought, attention, care, and watchfulness, rather than from wilful design. But these are the very qualities which it behooves a steward to have, and the want of them may easily work as much mischief as a deliberate embezzlement of trust funds. In truth, it is negative sins which ruin the vast majority of those who are lost. It is not what men do, but what they fail to do, which brings them to final and remediless grief. In our Lord's solemn and startling picture of the last Judgment, the sentence of the condemned is made to turn upon the words—"Inasmuch as ye did it not."

Waste, then, is not simply unwise, unfortunate, and undesirable but sinful. It is a violation of undeniable duty. It is a misuse of what in fee belongs to the Lord and not to us, and, as such, subjects the misuser to a severe and searching account. Nor is it any objection to this view that many otherwise wicked persons perform this duty punctiliously and are models of judicious economy ; for what they do from a bad motive, we are to do from a good one ; what they practice merely for selfish ends, we are to perform out of regard to him who said, Gather up the fragments, etc. Yet such persons, with all their apparent excellence in this respect, are often far astray. They are aptly represented by the disciples at the time when they, headed by Judas, reproached the loving and grateful sister of Lazarus, because she broke a costly alabaster box of precious perfumed oil, and poured its contents over the Saviour's head

and feet. "To what purpose is this waste?" was their indignant exclamation. But our Lord speedily corrected their foolish error. What box was too expensive, what perfume too rare to be bestowed upon the Son of Man, at once the creator and the Saviour of the world? How could there possibly be waste in any offering made to him? It was but the steward giving back to the principle what was his before, and, as such, was the first and most legitimate use to be made of any earthly possession. The case of Mary, therefore, settles the principle, that there can be no waste in giving to the Lord's cause; nothing is ever lost which is expended for his honor. In the eyes of worldings, or of very imperfectly sanctified believers, it may seem to be thrown away; but this is because they have forgotten the tenure of all human property, and the paramount obligations under which every one lies to his Maker.

II. A second reason for economy is, that *Prodigality always leads to other sins*, and, sometimes, by a very short road. It is true that extreme parsimony is often followed by the same result. The man who saves simply for the purpose of saving, who is bent on securing, at all hazards, every penny to which he has the shadow of a claim, is often sorely tempted to transgress the proper bounds, and violate right, for the sake even of petty gains. But this temptation does not operate where economy is studied as a matter of Christian duty, and men sedulously avoid waste, not for mere gain, but on the ground of principle. And this is the kind of frugality which the sacred scriptures inculcate and commend. But it is scarcely possible for the wasteful to avoid dishonesty. Habits of lavish and careless profusion, prosecuted for any length of time, make grievous inroads upon the largest estate, or the most generous income. But when means become contracted and resources cease to equal expenditure, the impulse is almost irresistible to keep up the style of living, either by contracting debts, which there is little or no probability of ever repaying, or by actually appropriating the property of others. The thought of retrenchment, of economy, of gathering up fragments so that nothing be lost, seems inadmissible. Such a thing has never been thought of as a moral obligation, while, as a practical measure, it runs counter to all the habits and impressions of years. Hence the children of extravagance content themselves with saying, it is too late now to begin a different course; and, accordingly, resort to one devious measure after another, until at last the kite can no longer be kept flying, and fortune and character are engulfed in a common ruin. This is the real history of nearly all the cases in which persons of good standing and respectable connections, suddenly are found to have fallen into the hands of criminal justice. They began with prodigality, and they ended in crime. Spendthrifts and wasters



often congratulate themselves that whatever may be said to their disadvantage, at least there is nothing mean about them. Yet it is certain, that generally their profusion is lavished upon themselves ; and what is meaner than selfishness ? And not unfrequently, as we have seen, it runs into dishonesty ; and what is baser than theft, breach of trust, or fraud ? It is easy to call bitter sweet and sweet bitter, evil good and good evil, but the things themselves remain unchanged ; and it is time that the old-fashioned virtues of sober industry and wise economy had their due credit, instead of being thrust out of sight as things of no account in comparison with that lordly disposition which consists in scorning the smallest saving, and in being very free in the use of what turns out to be other people's money. Nobody can respect a grasping miser ; but what I contend is, that nobody should respect a careless spendthrift. The latter treads as closely upon the verge of crime as the former, and, perhaps, does more mischief in the long run, by setting a bad example to the young and unthinking, by creating a false standard of excellence, and by habitually trampling under foot the true aims of human life.

III. A third reason for saving, as the text demands, is found in the *many good uses to which all savings may be turned*. The up-building of God's kingdom in the earth, and the consequent, or rather coincident, amelioration of the race, are to be carried on by human hands and means under the Divine blessing. In this work there is room for the co-operation of laborers of every degree and class, whether with hand, or tongue, or purse. In reclaiming prodigals, or teaching the ignorant, or diffusing the sacred Scriptures, or training ministers, or multiplying a religious literature, or sending missionaries to the heathen, there are innumerable ways in which the mammon of unrighteousness may be used to accomplish the most righteous and noble ends. So manifold are the schemes, while each concurs to the common result, that every peculiarity, I might say every caprice, of a benevolent giver may be gratified. Whatever preference he may indulge for special modes of operation will be sure to find itself suited somewhere in the wide range. Besides, as our Lord truly told us, "The poor ye have always with you." There will ever be the old and helpless, widows and orphans, the blind and the dumb, the victims of their own incapacity or providence, or the sufferers from others' violence or fraud. In no country of the world is there or has there been so equal a distribution of property as in our own favored land, and yet there is no neighborhood, from one ocean to the other, in which there are not objects of charity. It seems to be a part of God's continual providence that the benevolent affections of his creatures should never lack occasion for their exercise and enlargement. Cer-

tainly the call comes up unceasingly. The work never is, never will be finished.

Now, to meet these calls,—to be ready at the first cry of distress,—to have wherewith either to give to him that needeth, or to supply the great spiritual destitutions which abound in the world, there is need to obey the duty enjoined in the text. It is not the rich alone who are to provide for the poor or for the Lord's treasury. Neither the privilege nor the duty belongs to them exclusively. All are to have a part in the thrice-blessed work, and the means are to be secured by the simple method of gathering up the fragments, that nothing may be lost. Such an aim as this reflects credit upon the most trifling saving. It takes it quite out of the category of small things, and elevates it to the dignity of a virtue. Nor do those who have opportunity to know, cherish any doubt that a very large part of what is given in charity in this broad land and elsewhere, comes from savings, effected in personal and household expenditure, and that not only among the poor and persons of moderate means, but even among those who are, or are considered rich. And I do not know why it should not be esteemed just as praiseworthy to *save* money for God and humanity, as to earn it for that purpose. An authentic incident, old as it is, and familiar as it may be, will illustrate the principle. Many years ago, in England, two collectors for missions called at the house of a man of means for a contribution. As they stood in the hall, they heard the master of the-house reproving a servant-maid with some severity for throwing away the small end of a candle which remained after burning. At this, one proposed they should retire, as certainly so close an economist would give them nothing. The other insisted that as they could suffer nothing worse than a refusal they should try. They did so, and at once received a roll of guineas, so much beyond anything they had expected that they could not refrain from mentioning the candle-end, and their inferences from it. "Ah," said the giver, "I am able to give so largely to your and other causes, because I guard so closely against all waste." This case does not stand alone. It can be matched again and again in our own day and land. Were it to become universal or even general for Christians to gather their fragments, in order to obtain resources for giving, no charitable or philanthropic treasury would ever labor under more than temporary embarrassment. This is a mine of wealth, the depth and richness of which no one can estimate until the trial has been made.

The duty we have been considering is one of universal obligation, yet there is no country on earth where it needs to be set forth so earnestly as in our own. Many of our own people, not having informed themselves by reading or observation of the condition of people of other lands in this respect, have no con-

ception of the comparative scale of expenditure and of living. Nowhere in Europe do laboring men receive such wages or eat such food as they do here. Many of them there eat meat only on holidays, and others have for their only loaf a kind of black bread, which no servant here would look at. And as our day-laborers live thus well, so correspondingly do those who are at the next remove above them in means. The variety of dishes on their tables, and the changes of clothing during the year, the number of trinkets they wear, and the excursions they make, are such as in any country of Europe would be found only among the positively wealthy. If we ascend higher up in the scale of prosperity, we find a display of extravagance and luxury which only the pen of the satirist can properly stigmatize. Now, one unfailing consequence of these habits of profuse expenditure among all classes, (each profuse in proportion to its means,) is waste—a persistent neglect to gather up the fragments—a kind of foolish and simple pride in not stooping to economy. A German, in New York, who rose in a few years from poverty to wealth, was asked the secret of his success. His answer was too coarse for me to repeat it in his words, but the substance was: not that he was more active, industrious, or shrewd than his neighbors, but that what they wasted he saved; and the difference between them in the course of years was reckoned by tens of thousands.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to say that every one should cut down his or her expenditures to the bare means of subsistence. Neither reason nor sacred Scripture require or justify this. But I do mean to say,

1. That in this country the general tendency among all classes is to a style of living quite beyond any rational estimate of what is appropriate to their circumstances.

2. That this leads, by necessary consequence, to a disregard of economy, which is in flat contradiction to our Lord's precept in the text. Of course, in this place, I cannot go into details, nor, indeed, were it otherwise proper, do I have the ability in any one case to draw the line, and declare to you just when and where you should cease to spend and begin to save. Here, as elsewhere, the pulpit states the general principle as drawn from the Sacred Scriptures, while it is left to the individual reason and conscience to make the application.

And if ever there was a period in the life-time of my oldest hearer when this duty was especially incumbent, now is that period. On the one hand, there is the loudest call for charity from the foreign mission field, from the religious wastes on our frontiers, from the victims of war in camp and hospital and on the march, from the freedmen cast by hundreds and thousands upon our hands, from the white refugees driven by barbarous.

guerrillas from their homes, and from innumerable cases of long and individual suffering. Surely, it is a double sin to waste any of the gifts of God's bounty at a time when there are so many ready to perish for the lack of them. Let, then, old and young, rich and poor, male and female, gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.

On the other hand, our country is engaged in a fearful and perilous struggle for its very life. Its best blood is poured out like water, and its public debt swelled at the rate of more than half a thousand millions a year. Sore suffering is felt all over the land. Widows and orphans abound, maimed wrecks of humanity are scattered in every neighborhood, multitudes of individuals and households are compelled, by the enormous rise in prices, to make life one long and weary struggle against privation and want.

Is this a time for luxurious living and lavish expenditure? Is it not odious, as well as unchristian to seek any kind of shabby splendor or ostentatious display? Ought not modesty, sobriety, economy, to reign everywhere throughout the loyal North, when the very flower of the nation are mowed down—mangled, maimed—by tens of thousands in a week, and the air is thick with the sighs of the bereaved who mourn for the touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is forever still? But such a course is not only unseemly—as much so as it would be to dance and frolic at a funeral—but unpatriotic, a blow at the vital interests of the country. "The person who occupies what is equivalent to the labor of a man in useless extravagance, virtually withdraws one soldier from the field, or the services of one man in producing or forwarding supplies for the defense of the country." In this case, so far from the old paradox being true, that private vices are public benefits, the wasteful prodigal benefits no one, but does injury all round. He throws away his own means, he incites the silly to rival him in his frivolous expenditure, he insults the sorrows of numberless stricken mourners, and he strikes one more dagger into the heart of his bleeding, desolate country.

## SERMON VI.

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.\*

"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, etc.—LUKE xiv : 17, 31.

To minds of earthly mould, it seems strange that one may not do what he will with his own ; that he should be called to account for using as he pleases, the property *his* hands have earned ; above all, that he should be punished for either his prodigality or parsimony. Therefore, when Christ taught the Pharisees that God or mammon must be abandoned, and that ungodliness, no less than vice, is destructive of the soul, they derided him. This parable contains a forcible illustration of the sentiment scarcely credited by the lovers of pleasure even now, that the honorable man of this world, who uses it neither to the glory of God, nor the good of mankind, is in no less danger of losing his soul, than the most flagitious.

The condition of this honorable man is contrasted with that of a beggar who feared God ; not to give encouragement to the hopes of the poor while destitute of piety, nor to alarm the rich and honorable, who possess not the spirit of the world. Character, and not rank, causes the distinction between the righteous and the wicked in their final state.

1. We are presented first with a man of rank and fortune, living in ease and pleasure, not penurious but worldly, not one of those who ruin their families by intemperance, or their neighbors by fraud. It is such a man as is commonly an object of envy rather than aversion. But he was not of that class, who, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, do all to the glory of God. He could not make the Christian's appeal, "whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." Though he does not rank with the profligate, neither is he elevated above men whose description is, "not of the Father but of the world."

To shew that poverty and suffering, on the other hand, are no excuse for ungodliness, we have set before us next, a fellow-creature, not merely without fortune but destitute of the necessities of life, a man diseased and destitute of medical aid. Without friends to provide for him, or limbs to carry him, he is borne to the rich man's gate to be fed with the fragments of his table.

Who would not say this inequality of condition was hard ? Who would not prefer the character and condition of the man of plenty to those of the man of want ? I can tell you. None

\* Name of the author not furnished.

would indulge such preference, did none abandon the law of faith and walk by sight. None other than they who forget how short our time is, how precarious our circumstances, and how soon both the pleasures and ills of this life are over.

2. Whoever fears God estimates the world, and life, and things present, and things to come, by faith, and therefore seeks first the kingdom of God. All others are governed by appearances, and therefore neglect the duties of piety and the interests of the future for present gratification. We must not charge God foolishly, nor in the most afflicted state seek counsel from the wicked. If the condition of men seem unequal, it is in no case hard. Our heaviest trials are lighter than our sins, and whatever our sufferings or our pleasures, they are not the recompense of our deeds. It came to pass that the beggar died ; —happy end for the good man ! But the rich man died also. Ah ! said a man of fortune of my acquaintance, “ that is the misery of it, we must leave all.” That man will be able to say at last, Lord, Lord, have I not eaten and drunk at thy table ? But what will he profess unto him ? Fools are we to covet affluence, if it have influence thus to wed us to possessions which we must leave. Perhaps he thought the soul slept with the body, or perhaps he had a secret hope that they would suffer together for a period only. I did not ask him. But I inquired of the word of God which makes no misrepresentations, and it answered that the godly man, though a beggar, was carried by angels to a state of rest, that the rich man lifted up his eyes in woe. Death makes no change, then, in a man’s disposition. He carries the same temper to the other side of the grave which he indulged on this. The soul that was holy, is holy still, and that which was filthy, filthy still. No new character is formed by its transition from the material world, to the world of spirits. The rich man makes no mourning for his sins. His affliction is, that he is in pain. Deliver a sinner from pain and he cares not for the honor of God. Deliver a just man from sin and you shall never hear him complain of his sufferings.

What a change is here ! From carelessness and pleasure on the one part, to thoughtfulness and remorse ! From abjectness of condition on the other, to dignity and glory.

Why this difference ? and why do we not inquire, and learn the answer now ? why persist in waiting for the final reckoning, in order to return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not ! Why, child of prosperity ! forbid your friends to remind you of your latter end ? why, fond parent, hide the truth from your children, till, to tell them of it, is to bring the miseries of the future into the present life ? Why teach them, by example, to forget their dangers, and their duties, for fear of im-



pairing their joys, till they are placed beyond the reach of recovering the image of God. The wretched man, however, cries for mercy. 'Father Abraham! send relief.' Unhappy man! who have none other, than Abraham to their father. But why may he have no mitigation of his anguish, why may not the beggar, who ate of the fragments from his table, requite the kindness with one drop of water? We can only say, God had determined otherwise, and his counsel will stand. The sufferer is reminded, therefore, that he has no ground of complaint. He chose his good things in this life, and he no less than the beggar received the gifts his heart desired. Had their preferences been one, the same had been their condition. He might have taken Christ's yoke, and have found rest to his soul. He knew the determination of God, or might have known it. But now the separation is made, the dividing line is impassable, and the pious friends who would gladly have helped, when counsel might have availed, are now forbidden to relieve him. Abraham does not command in heaven. God is king there, and intercessions for sinners end with their probation. Prayers for the dead are useless in *this* world, they are so in the world of destiny. We are to receive, according to the deeds done in the body, not according to views formed after soul and body are separated. God has restricted the period of preparation for heaven to the present life. Between earth and heaven intercourse is practicable. Now, therefore, remember, is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. Take fast hold of the instruction, let it not go.

The rich man, however, did not lose the feelings of nature, by the transition and by the sufferings of his soul, and though while salvation was possible he cared to no purpose for himself, nor for his brethren, he learned at length, that nothing but salvation is worthy of solicitude. The favor of a messenger to his Father's house, to inform them of his situation, was next his request. He would save them from fatal mistakes, concerning the nature and the means of life. We may be selfish, and we may be benevolent in our wishes for the honor and interest of our friends. We may consult the will of God, or our own pleasure only, in urging, and laboring for their salvation. But whatever our motives, no soul doomed to hell, can be supposed to possess the spirit of benevolence to man, of obedience to God: and if he carry not this spirit out of the world, and if suffering do not produce it, how should he gain it, *there*? His request is founded on the fear of their descent to the same place of torment. But it was a reflection upon God, as if he had not done enough, to convince them of their danger, to dissuade them from their sinful preferences. and thus to prevent their ruin. Did not his brethren live in the same country with Lazarus? enjoy the same means of salvation?

With what show of reason or goodness could he ask for them, any greater advantages than had proved adequate to the beggar's security?

Besides, a messenger from the dead could add nothing to the knowledge, or the arguments, of the living; and he who is impenitent under the grace of the gospel, would be so in heaven or in hell.

3. This is a solemn lesson to the man who lives in error, and yet rests his hope of impunity on the supposition that he governs himself by the law of evidence. Give him sufficient evidence of his error, and he will renounce it. Let Christ come down from the cross, said the Jew, or let a dead man speak, says the Gentile, and I will believe. Why not believe then, what the dead man has spoken, from the place of the wicked, what Christ has uttered in the person of the Father of believers.

Is there no evidence here? Yet how many men read this admonition and persist in the same course with the man of pleasure, covet the world as earnestly, and seek their own as fervently, and go down to the grave as quickly, and drop into perdition as certainly, only through unbelief! How many, carrying with them the temper they exhibit here, can desire, and wonder, and call on some pious ancestor, as ineffectually? Will you be of this number? let me show you that if you will, neither the sight of heaven and of hell, or, what is equivalent in your view, a messenger from the dead, would tend at all to reform you. No testimony is so well adapted to this end, as that already furnished you in the gospel of Christ. I am not so weak as to deny, that if one of the venerable shades in the grave yard near by were to rise and stand up in my place, and tell you all that he has learned in the world of spirits, and found upon this statement an exhortation to repentance, the impression would be more affecting and durable, than is made by this discourse of Jesus Christ. But I deny that it ought so to be.

The bible is the word of God. Its doctrines, precepts, promises, threatenings, directions, descriptions, correspond with the character of a being, wise, holy, gracious, powerful. They are such as no creature could have invented—such as none could have any rational motive to invent. The wisdom, purity, grandeur and perfectness of the God there revealed, and the symmetry and comprehensiveness of the system therein contained, altogether transcend those of any other being and system. Whence, then, but from Him who is the source of knowledge, could the penmen of this book derive their notions of such a Being—of such a system? Either it was from God, or there is no God, in our conceptions. For there is none so great or powerful, wise or good, beside, and no scheme of thought so grand, as the character and scheme unfolded here. Is it the word of God?

What could the rising dead be able to add to its matter? And if not wiser than God, what better means devise, to convince and persuade men? If not more merciful than God, how could he be supposed to wish the sinner additional testimony or information? This is a short argument, but it is not conclusive? What then have you to gain by further communications from the world of spirits?

But if nothing would be gained in point of strength, and nothing in the matter of the testimony before us, what could be added to the nature and fitness of the evidence? That the event would be strictly miraculous, is not to be denied; but the gospel is confirmed by many such miracles, and the fitness of another of the same kind, is inconsistent with the supposition, that God has any just claim upon our faith. The demand of further evidence being unreasonable, the answer would be necessarily equivocal; and you would have as much reason to deny the evidence of a fact addressed to your senses, as you now have to doubt the sufficiency of the evidence addressed to your faith. God knows the nature and amount of evidence best adapted to the end for which he has spoken to man. To grant more, or other, than he has already given or promised, would be a confession that every man is faultless, to whom it has proved ineffectual. It would look like granting the unbeliever and the impenitent, a privilege for his obstinacy; and every such grant would be but an argument for still further demands.

To this reasoning let us add a few facts, and though argument fail, let not facts be resisted. Take the very case stated: for Christ makes no improbable suppositions. The rich man was in hell. He therefore was convinced by experiment, that the penalty of the law follows the mere forgetfulness of God and his commands. But if the execution of this penalty produced no repentance, how absurd the supposition, that a bare statement of the fact, by a messenger to his brethren, should beget a humble spirit. You would say to him, were he sent to you from hell;—if you state facts, and would persuade me, give a proof in your own example. Are you sorry for your sins, and your negligence: if not, why come to us with an exhortation to repentance? On the other hand, were the messenger from heaven, you would answer, you have never been in hell; you know nothing of its torments by experience. Spare yourself then, the counsels we have already received from Jesus Christ, and the eye witnesses of his resurrection.

But the experiment has been made. Saul calls for Samuel from the grave. The prophet rises, and stands up. From him, Saul learns his doom. Does he prepare accordingly to die? He sinks, on the other hand, into a state of despondence; he is driven to madness; his repentance is of the world, and, like that of

Judas, worketh death. Had the rich man never heard of this ? He was a Jew, and had probably read the sacred history of his nation. Why did he predict for his brethren, an efficacy in means which had wrought no salutary influence on himself ?

Many of the Jews saw a dead man arise. They discovered no artifice in the case. We know not that they derived profit from the scene.

The people at the foot of Sinai, heard the voice of God himself. They were alarmed, but not amended. How vain the hope then, that you would allow to any species of evidence, new to you, in the manner of attestation, an influence more desirable than is claimed for that which you resist. Acknowledge then, the justice of the reply to the sufferer, and to every unrepentant heart. If you are not reformed by the gospel, we must despair of your salvation, under means of your own prescription.

The compassionate God has devised for you the best possible means of salvation ; and if these fail, you must make your bed with the rich man in hell. It is too much to think of ? What, then, will it be to suffer ? Is the apprehension insupportable to your *friends* ? how intolerable will the experiment be to *you* !

Christ has spread these solemn facts before you, for the very purpose of influencing your conduct. He has done it in a manner the least likely to render terror prevalent over encouragement. He could not have given a sufficient revelation of the righteous judgment of God, in a manner less terrible ; nor placed before you more tender and noble motives than the gospel offers, to convert you to God. Why wait, then, for other means of persuasion ?

With no *better* advantages than the impenitent of this age, the rich man was required to be Godly or die. You, if a sinner, are required to repent or perish. It was his practical mistake, that repentance is not necessary to happiness. Yours, is the same. You are not grossly immoral in the eye of man ; neither was he. You give your fragments to the poor ; so did he. But he chose his portion in the world, and you do so also. He was cast off, not so much because he had committed what the world call great crimes, as because he lived to himself, and not to God. So, also, unless you repent and forsake the same course of impiety and selfishness, will God cast you off. When it was too late for prayer to avail even with God, he cried to Abraham. To whom will you cry for help in the day of darkness, when you can claim neither God nor Abraham for your Father ? He did not charge God with injustice ; he deserved all he suffered. God is no respecter of persons. If you live and die like him, how can you escape the consciousness of similar desert, and the evils consequent on such a judgment ?